

## Citizen Support for the European Parliament: Knowledge and the Democratic Deficit

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### Abstract

Despite enhanced powers and the experience of four direct elections, the European Parliament's potential for reducing the European Community's democratic deficit remains in doubt. Diffuse support for the European Parliament is evident, but is support grounded in knowledge of the EC? We develop and test two models using multiple regression with data from Eurobarometer 37 (1992) on five EC member states: Britain, Denmark, France, Germany and Italy. The first model employs indicators of socio-economic status, media reliance and political interest to predict citizen knowledge of the European Union. Political interest, gender and awareness of the EC's importance are the most powerful predictors of knowledge, but there is wide variation in the importance of other predictors across the five countries. The second model attempts to explain citizen support for the European Parliament using knowledge levels in addition to the predictors used in the first model. General support for European integration and awareness of the EC's importance are the most potent predictors of EP support. With the exception of Germany, knowledge of the EC is unrelated to support for the EP. Media exposure is associated with knowledge, but not support. Overall, support is a function of general disposition toward the EC which is unrelated to knowledge. Our findings suggest a daunting prospect for those who hope to strengthen informed public support for the EP as a means to closing the democratic deficit.

### Introduction

After four rounds of direct elections for the European Parliament (EP), European publics' awareness of the institution does not appear to have increased.<sup>1</sup> This despite substantial increases in the powers of the European Parliament stemming from the Single European Act and the Maastricht Treaty (Duff 1994).

About half those surveyed shortly before the 1994 European elections reported having seen or heard something about the European Parliament in the media, but only 22% knew the correct date of the 1994 EP elections (Eurobarometer 41 Report, 5). By 55% to 37%, respondents said national issues were more likely than European ones to affect their vote in EP elections. Nevertheless, a plurality (44% to 33%) reported they would like to see the EP's powers expanded. There is even stronger sentiment for having EU Commissioners made accountable to the EP.

Beyond the public, controversy is widespread among European Union elites--officials, parliamentarians and academic experts-- about the present and future roles of the EP (Shackleton 1994a, 1994b). Changes in the EP's composition, i.e., the move from a membership composed of national parliamentarians to directly elected Euro-MPs, and the EP's increased powers were viewed by some as the means to remedy a looming democratic deficit. Others saw these changes as creating a rival to national parliaments in the oversight of other EC/EU institutions without offering a stronger basis for the legitimacy of European actions. Overall public support for the EU has shown some decline during the past three years, reversing the general trend of preceding decades. Some national governments and national legislators have expressed a preference for re-nationalization of EU functions in their discovery of the principle of "subsidiarity." Other voices express fear that increasing the power of the EP is a long step toward the creation of Washington-style "gridlock" ("Capitol Hill

Comes to Europe"). These developments imply that the EP may have to fight hard to retain its present powers, let alone have them extended.

Our paper is concerned with citizens' knowledge of European institutions and decision processes, and how that knowledge is related to expressed levels of citizen support for the European Parliament. It is well known that there are significant national variations in support levels for European integration and in perceptions of the values of membership (Inglehart 1990, 417-421; Gabel and Palmer 1993). Do these differences reside in variations in knowledge? Do the same factors affect knowledge across member states? Does it matter for their knowledge, perceptions and support levels what sources citizens use to acquire information about the EP and the other European institutions? Critically important, what are the implications of these factors' impact on citizens' perceptions of Parliament as an institution worthy of their support? If the EP is to help legitimate EU actions and thereby contribute to closing the democratic deficit, would it not be in a better position to do this if its support rests on a foundation of knowledge rather than on an undifferentiated "feel good" factor which could be subject to short-term, radical change?

### The Democratic Deficit

Both public opinion and elite perspectives suggest a mixed picture for those who have hoped that an enhanced EP would remedy the EU's democratic deficit. Finding a remedy, of course, requires a diagnosis of the problem. Recent literature on the democratic deficit reveals many perspectives on its nature.

Neunreither (1994, 300) identifies several: the failure of the EU's institutional system to comply with democratic norms, the imbalance between the (limited) powers of the parliament and those of other EU institutions, and the weakness of intermediate structures which might otherwise link EU institutions to the people of the EU, especially the absence of genuinely European political parties and a European media. Additional diagnoses of the problem include the absence of transparency in EU decision processes (Lodge 1994, 345), the technocratic, elitist conception of the Commission (Featherstone 1994, 150-151), and the failure of national parliaments to hold their governments accountable or otherwise effectively scrutinize European activities (Duff 1994, 161-164).

The failure of a European "body politic" to develop is of particular interest. Many barriers to such a development are inherent given differences of language, national histories, and the continued primacy of national political matters (Malcolm 1995, 64-65). Beyond these are EU and national government practices which have limited the development of a democratic space in which a European citizenship could flourish (Meehan 1993, 154-156).

Regardless of which barriers are more important, in the democratic societies of Europe, acceptance and support by the citizenry is a *sine qua non* both for the legitimacy of the European Parliament and for its capacity to diminish the Union's democratic deficit. Legislatures typically have been seen by political theorists, politicians and publics as distinctive, even pivotal, political institutions of liberal democracy. Although the EP continues to lack some of the attributes of national legislatures, research on national legislatures offers some guidance for understanding the EP's potential to close the democratic deficit.

A crucial factor affecting the quality of representative government is constituents' knowledge of the legislature, its members, and where the legislature fits in the system of government. If citizens are to exercise control through the legislative system and have a say in the course of policy, they must have some elemental understanding of it. The quality of democratic politics diminishes if citizens are ignorant.<sup>2</sup> Yet for most people, most of the time, politics is of tertiary importance and the costs of becoming informed outweigh the perceived benefits. Therefore, "voters are no fools to remain ignorant" (Converse, 1975, 96).

If lack of support for the EP is concentrated among the least knowledgeable--who are less likely to participate in politics--then its impact may be slight. On the other hand, if support for the EP is lowest among those who are most knowledgeable--who are also most likely to have an impact on the political process--then the prospects for the EP as a remedy for the democratic deficit may be bleak.

Prior research on the causes of political information and sophistication suggests that basically three factors affect political awareness: cognitive ability, opportunity, and motivation.<sup>3</sup> Those with more "cognitive ability," whether measured in terms of formal schooling or "intelligence," are better informed about politics than those with less. People with greater opportunity to acquire political information, usually because they are better situated within the social structure and/or because they are exposed to more information flowing through media channels, typically know more about politics than those less favorably located. Finally, the more people are motivated to learn, the more they know.

## Models of Knowledge and Support

Working from this base of understanding we have developed two models. The first attempts to predict citizen knowledge of the European Union. The second attempts to predict citizen support for the European Parliament. Ideally, our first model would focus specifically on citizen knowledge of the European Parliament. However, the data available to us do not include a sufficient number of knowledge items on the Parliament itself. We have blended those available into an index which includes several knowledge items relating to other EU institutions. (See appendix for an explanation of how the knowledge index was constructed.) We have confidence in making the connection between general knowledge of the EU and knowledge of the EP because research elsewhere has shown that the same factors affecting political information in general are also powerful predictors of what people know about the legislature in particular (Bennett and Bennett 1993).

### Knowledge Model

Our knowledge model incorporates four classes of predictors. The first set are variables usually included in political information models: education (which taps cognitive ability and motivation), age, gender, occupation, and family income (which encompass aspects of location in the social structure that affect opportunity). The second class are media exposure indicators of reliance on newspapers, television, and radio for political information (which plumb opportunity and, to a lesser degree, motivation). The third includes several variables that may affect people's motivation to acquire information: partisanship, ideological position, and general political interest. This class assumes that those who are more politically involved and interested in public affairs are more likely to be politically knowledgeable than the apathetic. The final set enable us to examine the impact of general awareness of the EU and general support for it on knowledge.<sup>4</sup> Presumably, the aware and supportive have both opportunity and motivation to acquire information.

### Support Model

The knowledge model predictors plus the knowledge indicator are then employed in our second model as predictors of support for the European parliament. The key question we seek to address through this model is whether those who profess support for the EP know much about it. The literature of public opinion and the

EU suggests how the elements in our model may work. There is substantial evidence that younger, better educated, more affluent citizens in professional and managerial occupations have tended to support European integration (Inglehart, Reif and Melich 1992). But does this mean people with these characteristics will support the EP also?

Our model also enables us to test the impact of media exposure on generating support for the EP. Television's impact is of special interest here because the proportion of those watching the news on TV "everyday" has been rising steadily since Eurobarometers began tracking it in 1980, from 60% then to 75% in spring, 1994 (Eurobarometer 41 Report, 9).

The political variables in the model enable us to test the impact of partisanship on support for the EP. Citizens often have developed their personal positions on European integration from cues provided by the parties with which they identify (Flickinger 1995). Does this carry over to the EP? While political interest per se should not be expected to lead to support for the EP, it may be associated with acquiring knowledge, which in turn may shape attitudes toward the EP. Ideology has sometimes been linked to support/opposition to European integration. Leftist opponents have characterized the

EC/EU as a bastion of capitalism while their conservative counterparts have criticized it as a haven for socialists and bureaucratic regulators.

Awareness of the EC/EU and general support for European integration are incorporated into the model to see what extent these general traits translate into support for a specific European institution. We expect that they will. But there are theoretical reasons for believing they may be distinct, e.g., one may support the EC without supporting the Parliament if she fears growth of the EP would undermine the European role of the national parliament.

Lastly, the inclusion of the knowledge index as a predictor is vital to assessing the basis of support for the EP. Certainly one may support EC without knowing much about it (Janssen 1991, 467). Does support rest on the foundation of an informed citizenry? Or on wishes and hopes? Or on cues from elites?

#### Data Source

The data for the initial test of these models were drawn from Eurobarometer 37, a survey conducted during the spring of 1992 (Reif and Melich 1993b). Although Eurobarometers generally have some limitations for comparative research (Katz 1985; Schmitt 1989), they offer the advantage of a standard set of survey items asked of respondents from different countries. This enables us to avoid the pitfalls of trying to construct comparable measures from different national surveys. One may argue that it would have been preferable to use Eurobarometers done at the time of a European election. We considered those for 1989 and 1984 but found that they contained fewer indicators for the variables of interest to us, especially those for knowledge of the European Community (Rabier 1986, Reif and Melich 1991 and

1993a). With attempts to secure the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty in full swing, Eurobarometer 37 was conducted at a period of somewhat higher than normal interest in European affairs. More importantly, it contained a reasonable set of indicators for the predictors we posited in our model. We believed that it would best suit our needs for this preliminary excursion into the popular bases of support for the EP.

#### Explanation/justification of choice of countries

Rather than do a single analysis combining all twelve EU member states, we have chosen to do separate analyses of five member states: Britain,<sup>5</sup> Denmark, France, Germany, and Italy. This approach has two advantages. First, it allows more discrete tests of our models. Second, it gives us the opportunity to explore national differences. This is especially important given evidence that citizens' attitudes toward EC matters are influenced significantly by national politics (Franklin, et.al. 1994).

Our country cases include two original members, Germany and France, whose governments and people have been supportive of European integration.<sup>6</sup> France and Germany generally have been near the European average of support for integration

between 1981 and 1994. On the other hand, Britain and Denmark could be characterized as latecomers whose governments and publics have been persistent skeptics in matters European. Britons have been consistently below the European average, though support grew steadily from the early 1980s to the early 1990s

before tailing off (as has support in most countries in the 1990s). Danes were much below the European average until 1992, when they actually went above it before settling to the average since. Italy is an original, generally pro-integration member;

Eurobarometer time series show clearly that Italians have been consistently above the European average in seeing the EC as a "good thing". Italy's serious legitimacy problems for its national government allow us to entertain the proposition that domestic dissatisfaction may lead people to pin their hopes on European solutions to problems. Italians have had the highest turnout rates in the four European Parliament elections, Britons the lowest followed by the Danes. German and French turnout has been near, but slightly below the Euro average (Guyomarch, 1995; Flickinger and Studlar, 1992).

As Europe grapples with the balance of power between more centralized European institutions and established national institutions, rapid changes in media structures and markets, particularly in the case of television, have implications for both old and new political orders. The traditional hegemony of public broadcasting is being challenged by the explosion of new programming made possible by new technologies. The five countries in this study range across three models for the relationship between television and politics discussed by Kelly (1983). She described Britain as an example of a relatively

autonomous broadcasting system, Germany and Denmark as "politics- in-broadcasting" systems with political parties and significant social groups represented, and Italy and France as examples of countries where government has the power to intervene directly in broadcasting (Kelly 1983). New technologies challenge the media/informational structures of all these countries and raise questions about how to protect the "vulnerable values" of public broadcasting (Blumler 1992).

#### A Note on the Use of Ordinary Least Squares Regression

The next section describes an OLS regression model in which the Knowledge of the European Community Index was regressed on variables known to affect political information. Although some scholars call for recursive models to assess the process by which people learn about politics (Luskin 1990 provides the most detailed justification), difficulties in estimating two-stage- least squares regression on secondary survey data (Smith 1989) led us to estimate nonrecursive models using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression.

OLS regression is a robust data analysis technique which is appropriate even when the data do not meet all the model's assumptions (Cohen and Cohen 1983). The independent variables for the information and support models are of three types: natural dichotomies, true interval scales, or ordinal-level variables coded as closely as possible to interval-level scales. The dependent variable for the knowledge models depicted in Table 1 is an index derived from six questions on Eurobarometer 37 tapping awareness and knowledge about the EC (see Appendix). The dependent variable for the support models shown in Table 2 is the "Support for the European Parliament Index," which is derived from three items asked on Eurobarometer 37 (see Appendix for details). The "Knowledge of European Community Index" ranges from 1 to 11, while the "Support for the European Parliament Index" ranges from 3 to 9.

Some data analysts might question whether, given dependent variables such as these, OLS regression should be employed. We believe it can. As Borgatta and Bohrnstadt noted (1981, 29), since social science measurement is crude, most of our observed variables are "imperfect interval-level scales." Moreover, since most of the central constructs of the social sciences are conceptualized as continuous, and their distributions are such that the application of parametric statistics to their analyses will not result in seriously biased estimates.

In short, even if the dependent variable is not normally distributed, the departure from normality constitutes more a nuisance than a serious problem, and OLS regression can still be profitably employed.

Finally, residuals for each of the models described in tables 1 and 2 indicate no egregious violations of the OLS regression model's key assumptions.

#### Data Analyses

##### Knowledge of European Community

The Knowledge of European Community Index was regressed on ten variables known to affect political information (see Baker et al. 1994): age, gender, education, occupation, family income, partisanship, general political interest, and three measures of reliance on the mass media for information about public affairs-- newspapers, television, and radio (see Table 1). In addition, the models include a measure of ideological orientation. They also include two measures of general orientation to the European Community, perception of its importance (EC Aware) and support for European integration (EC Support).

The Knowledge of European Community Index was constructed from five factual items, a self-assessment of the respondent's level of information about the EC, and whether the respondent had recently heard anything about the European Parliament (see Appendix for details). Although the Index could range from 1 to 11, the national means ranged from Britain's 4.98 to Denmark's 6.18, with Germany at 6.09, France at 5.44 and Italy at 5.24.

Table 1: Predicting Citizen Knowledge of the European Community

	Denmark b (se b)	France b (se b)	Germany b (se b)
Age	-.01 (.00)**	.01 (.00)**	.01 (.00)*
Gender	.51 (.11)***	.48 (.12)***	.95 (.14)***
Education	.02 (.05)	.06 (.09)	.27 (.08)***
Occupation	.02 (.02)	.01 (.03)	.04 (.02)
Income	.03 (.02)	.05 (.02)**	.02 (.02)
Radio News	.10 (.04)*	.08 (.04)*	.11 (.06)*
TV News	-.08 (.08)	.16 (.06)**	-.02 (.10)
Newspaper	.27 (.04)***	.11 (.04)**	.29 (.06)***
Political Interest	.62 (.09)***	.42 (.09)***	.68 (.11)***
Ideology	.04 (.03)	.03 (.04)	-.03 (.04)
Party Affiliation			
Venstre/UDF/FDP	-.90 (.36)**	.00 (.24)	.78 (.46)
SocFolk/PCF/	-.75 (.90)	-.32 (.30)	---
Conserv/RPR/CDU	-.39 (.40)	.23 (.22)	.15 (.18)
SocialDem/PS/SPD	-.11 (.13)	-.20 (.19)	.11 (.18)
Ecol/Green	---	.04 (.20)	.83 (.29)**
EC Aware	.43 (.07)***	.28 (.07)***	.49 (.08)***
EC Support	.07 (.04)**	.14 (.05)**	.12 (.06)*
Adjusted R2 =	.25	.19	.36
S.E.E. =	1.47	1.57	1.70
(N = )	(847)	(712)	(739)

Source: Eurobarometer 37

Table 1: Predicting Citizen Knowledge of the European Community  
(continued)

	Great Britain b (se b)	Italy b (se b)
Age	.01 (.00)*	-.01 (.00)
Gender	.80 (.13)***	.34 (.16)*
Education	.34 (.10)***	.41 (.10)***
Occupation	-.01 (.02)	.02 (.03)
Income	.05 (.02)**	.05 (.03)
Radio News	.22 (.04)***	.05 (.05)
TV News	.09 (.09)	.27 (.11)*
Newspaper	.01 (.04)	.29 (.06)***
Political Interest	.51 (.11)***	.55 (.12)***
Ideology	.02 (.04)	-.01 (.05)
Party Affiliation		
LibDem/PRI	.67 (.29)*	.93 (.24)*
Communist	---	.06 (.25)
Conserv/DC	.45 (.18)**	.16 (.21)
Labour/PS	.34 (.17)*	-.17 (.27)
Nationalist/LL	-.34 (.58)	.10 (.68)
MSI	---	-.31 (.42)
EC Aware	.27 (.08)***	.24 (.09)**
EC Support	.05 (.05)	.23 (.09)*

Adjusted R2 =	.28	.34
S.E.E. =	1.53	1.73
(N = )	(632)	(551)

Source: Eurobarometer 37

Table 1 depicts each independent variable's unstandardized regression coefficient, its standard error (in parentheses), the level of significance achieved by each predictor (based on a two-tailed test), and the number of cases on which the OLS model was estimated. The table also depicts two indicators of model fit: the adjusted R2 and the standard error of the estimate (S.E.E.).<sup>7</sup>

Inspection of the data from the five countries highlights four results. First, almost all the predictors demonstrated some relevance for understanding citizens' knowledge of the EC. Second, two predictors turned out not to be relevant; neither occupation nor ideology achieved statistical significance in any country. The result for occupation is surprising, because in earlier research we had found it to matter for citizen knowledge of the national legislature in Britain and Canada (Baker et al. 1994). It may be that the occupation measure is simply too general to capture nuances such as workers in firms involved in international trade versus those who are not. We had believed that ideological orientation may shape motivation to acquire information about the EC, e.g., someone whose belief systems asserts that the EC is not very important would have no incentive to acquire information about it. Perhaps it does, but EC orientations may simply cut across the left-right ideological indicator that we used.

Third, a small number of predictors were quite powerful across all the countries. Most important among these was political interest. Indeed, we expected this because of the well-established role of interest in generating people's desire to follow public affairs and acquire information about them. Those who perceived that the EC was important for the future of their country were also likely to be more knowledgeable. Given the widespread recognition of the EC's importance ("important" was the mean response across all countries to the question of whether EC matters were "very important", "important", "not very important" or "not at all important" for our country's future), it is of interest that apparently only small differences in the recognized importance of the EC generate significant differences in knowledge. The power of gender difference is greater than we anticipated. Paradoxically, it is least strong in Italy where traditional cultural images suggest it might have the greatest power. Age and general support for the European Community achieved significance across four of the countries, but they contributed only modestly to the overall explanatory power of our model.

The fourth feature of our results is the wide variation in the importance of some predictors across the five nations. We take this to be evidence of the continuing significance of differences in national political cultures and institutional structures. Two media use indicators fall into this category. While listening to news on radio achieves significance in every case but Italy, it is a robust predictor in Britain. Newspaper readership is important in the Danish, German and Italian cases. But no common underlying reason is readily apparent. The mean frequency of reported readership is lowest in Italy, highest in Germany and second highest in Denmark.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, there is growing uncertainty about the assumption that, of all media usage, reading newspapers is most likely to instill knowledge (Price and Zaller 1993). Watching television news had an impact on knowledge in France and Italy, the two countries in this study that permit the most direct intervention into broadcasting by the state (Kelly 1983).

Education is the second most important predictor in Britain and Italy. It also is significant in Germany, but it fails to appear in Denmark and France. This may be explained by national differences in the structure of educational opportunity. Denmark and France have the highest mean levels of education and they have a longer history of wider access to higher education. Higher levels of education create both more opportunities and more incentives to acquire political information. Recall, that Danes had the highest mean knowledge score while the French were third. The remaining standard SES indicator, income, contributes modestly in the French and British cases, but not at all in the others.

Partisanship crops up as a factor in four countries, but its impact is modest and limited to one party in three of the four: the Danish Venstre who appear ill-informed, the German Greens (well-informed)

and the Italian Republicans (well-informed). Three parties appear in Britain, two of the major; in each case partisanship is linked to being better informed.

Overall, the thirteen predictors account for an average of 28.4% of the variance in the Knowledge of the European Community Index. However, there are substantial national variations in the adjusted R<sup>2</sup>s and the S.E.E.s. Our model appears reasonably satisfactory for the German and Italian cases, but less so for Britain and Denmark, and marginal for France. However, given several known sources of measurement error and possible mis-specification of the model in one or two countries, we believe have a reasonably good understanding of the factors responsible for European citizens' level of knowledge of the EC.

#### Support for the European Parliament

In this OLS regression model a Support for the European Parliament Index was regressed on the same set of variables as in the knowledge model. The only change was the addition of the Knowledge Index score for each respondent. The Support of the European Parliament Index was constructed from a series of three Eurobarometer 37 items (see Appendix for details). The first was the respondent's judgment of the importance of the EP in the life of the EC. The second was the respondent's judgment of whether the EP should play a more important role. The final element of the index was whether the respondent favored the EP having an equal voice with the Council of Ministers in enacting European legislation.

The potential range of scores on the index was 3 to 9. National means ranged from Denmark's 6.26 to Italy's 7.73 with France at 7.18, Germany at 6.86 and Great Britain at 6.68. As in the case of the Knowledge Index, the Support Index scores cluster near the mid-point of their potential range, but they are somewhat more widely disbursed (1.47 points as opposed to 1.20 points even with a narrower scale).

Table 2: Predicting Citizen Support of the European Parliament

	Denmark b (se b)	France b (se b)	Germany b (se b)
Age	.01 (.00)	-.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
Gender		-.11 (.11)	.08 (.10)
Education	-.03 (.01)**	-.03 (.02)*	-.07 (.07)
Occupation	.01 (.03)	.03 (.02)	.01 (.02)
Income		-.00 (.02)	-.00 (.01)
Radio News	-.12 (.05)*	.05 (.03)	-.01 (.05)
TV News	-.05 (.09)	.04 (.05)	-.14 (.09)
Newspaper	-.02 (.06)	.03 (.03)	-.08 (.06)
Political Interest	-.06 (.10)	-.02 (.07)	-.02 (.10)
Ideology	.00 (.03)	-.04 (.03)	-.07 (.03)*
Party Affiliation			
Venstre/UDF/FDP	.20 (.39)	.17 (.18)	-.33 (.39)
SocFolk/PCF/	.46 (1.13)	-.60 (.22)**	---
Conserv/RPR/CDU	.02 (.38)	.05 (.17)	.10 (.16)
SocialDem/PS/SPD	-.12 (.15)	-.23 (.15)	-.06 (.15)
Ecol/Green	---	-.15 (.15)	.40 (.24)
EC Aware	.18 (.08)*	.20 (.06)**	.41 (.08)***
EC Support	.48 (.04)***	.38 (.04)***	.43 (.05)***
Know EC	.02 (.04)	-.00 (.03)	.11 (.03)***
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Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> =	.24	.23	.33
S.E.E. =	1.26	.99	1.26



(N= ) (549) (485) (523)

Note: \* p=.05; \*\* p=.01; and \*\*\* p=.001

Source: Eurobarometer 37

Table 2: Predicting Citizen Support of the European Parliament  
(continued)

	Great Britain b (se b)	Italy b (se b)
Age	-.01 (.00)	.00 (.00)
Gender	-.27 (.13)*	.12 (.10)
Education	.02 (.09) -.11 (.06)*	
Occupation	.00 (.02) .02 (.02)	
Income	.01 (.02) -.02 (.02)	
Radio News	.03 (.04) -.00 (.03)	
TV News	-.01 (.09)	-.02 (.09)
Newspaper	.01 (.04) .03 (.04)	
Political Interest	-.10 (.10)	-.04 (.07)
Ideology	.02 (.04) .05 (.03)*	
Party Affiliation		
LibDem/Repub	-.00 (.28)	.04 (.20)
Communist	---	.19 (.15)
Conserv/DC	-.34 (.18)	.24 (.13)
Labour/Socialist	.16 (.17) .06 (.17)	
MSI	---	.15 (.25)
Nationalist/LL	-.49 (.50)	-.88 (.35)**
EC Aware	.20 (.08)*	.23 (.07)***
EC Support	.44 (.05)***	.22 (.06)***
Know EC	.00 (.04) .04 (.03)	
Adjusted R2 =	.23	.14
S.E.E. =	1.25	.89
(N= )	(444)	(385)

Note: \* p=.05; \*\* p=.01; and \*\*\* p=.001

Source: Eurobarometer 37

As in Table 1, Table 2 depicts each predictor variable's unstandardized regression coefficient, its standard error (in parentheses), the level of significance achieved by each predictor (based on a two-tailed test), and the number of cases on which the OLS model was estimated. The table also depicts two

indicators of model fit: the adjusted R2 and the standard error of the estimate (S.E.E.).

Perhaps the most striking finding is that six of our fourteen predictors failed to achieve significance in any country; these were: age, occupation, income, watching the news on TV, newspaper reading and political interest. We explore some of the implications of this fact in our concluding section. At the other extreme, only two predictors reached significance in all five countries: EC support and awareness of the importance of the EC. EC support also was the most powerful predictor in four of the five cases. The exception was Italy where it was just bested by awareness of the EC's importance.

The remaining six predictors played some role in at least one country, but there was little apparent pattern to their roles. Education was the only SES variable to appear as a significant predictor of support. It did so, but modestly, in Denmark, France and Italy. However, in each case its sign was negative indicating that the less well educated were more likely to support the EP than their better educated fellow citizens. Ideology was significant in Germany and Italy, but the direction of its impact

differed. In Germany, support was associated with being to the left, while in Italy it was associated with being to the right. Partisanship mattered in only two instances: for French Communists and Italian supporters of the Lombard League. In both these cases, party identifiers tended to be hostile toward the EP.

A media predictor (frequency of listening to news on the radio) reached significance only in Denmark. Gender was the second most important predictor in Britain but--contrary to the findings for knowledge--support was greater among women. Knowledge level was a significant predictor of support only in Germany.

The general picture emerging from this test of our support model is that support for the European Parliament is not grounded in social or political structures nor is it likely to be enhanced by media exposure. In four of the five countries, our knowledge index failed to achieve significance as a predictor of support for the EP. Rather support for the EP is an extension of an attitude set among the segment of the population who see the European Community as important to the future of their country, and who are generally supportive of European integration.

Overall, this model performs less well than the knowledge model. The fourteen predictors account for an average of 23.4% of the variance in the Support for the European Parliament Index. Again, there are substantial national variations in the adjusted R<sup>2</sup>s and the S.E.s. Our model is satisfactory for the Germany. But it does less well for France Britain and Denmark, and performs poorly in the Italian case.

## Conclusions

Early in this paper we posed a series of questions about the knowledge-support relationship and EC affairs in the eyes of citizens of EC member states. We asked whether the same factors affect knowledge across member states. We found that some-- general political interest, EC awareness, EC support, gender and information sources--do. But each country's model highlights distinctive factors as well.

We asked whether support for the European Parliament rests on a solid base of knowledge, and assumed parliamentary legitimacy would be better served if it did. We have found, that with the significant German exception, support does not rest on knowledge. Two country cases further illustrate the failure of the knowledge-support connection evident in the regression models. Danes registered the highest mean knowledge score but the lowest mean support score; Italians the next to lowest knowledge score and the highest support score.

We conclude that support is a function of general disposition toward the EC which is unrelated to knowledge. Nor does it appear that support for the EP is linked to particular segments of the population. We find no evidence of a "youth brigade" for the EP just as others have found reason recently to question whether young people are more supportive of European integration generally (Rattinger, 1994, 526; Janssen 1991, 463). Having a higher level of education is not positively associated with support; where education is a significant predictor its sign is negative. Nor do we find evidence that those in higher status occupations are more likely to support the EP. Reliance on particular media for news bears almost no relationship to support.

Finally, even partisanship is a marginal influence. Perhaps this is because EC issues increasingly divide parties internally. However, Rattinger (1994) has found that in Germany attitudes toward European integration are polarized by party preference, but with the proviso that those who identify with the older parties are more supportive of integration--but declining in numbers--while supporters of newer parties (e.g. Republikaner) are more skeptical.

Our findings suggest a daunting prospect for those who hope to strengthen public support for the European Parliament as a means to closing the democratic deficit. There is no readily identifiable social base to appeal to and the old partisan support bases may be eroding. Our results offer no basis for strategies which would stress the use of one type of media outlet to strengthen support. Nor do they offer support for a strategy which seeks to increase knowledge as a means of gaining support. However, the German exception calls out for further study.

We see several implications in the results of this analysis for future work. In addition to refining our models and measures, we would like to extend our approach to other countries and other surveys with the goals of including a wider range of cross-sectional cases and time series comparisons. Much remains to be explained when attempting to account for citizen support for the European Parliament.

## Appendix

### Construction of the "Knowledge of European Community Index"

Eurobarometer 37 asked five knowledge questions. Four concerned the location of the principal EC institutions: the Commission, the Parliament, the Council of Ministers and the Court of Justice. (Respondents were much more likely to answer the first two correctly.) A fifth item asked which institution held the final authority for decisions. Most respondents were inclined to answer--incorrectly--that it was Parliament rather than the Council. Knowledge questions were coded 0 if the respondent answered incorrectly and 1 if the answer was correct. These questions were supplemented with an item in which respondents were asked to rate themselves as to how well informed they thought they were on European Community affairs. This item yielded a five point scale ranging from "uninformed" to "very well informed." The last item in the index was whether the respondent recently had heard anything in the media about the European Parliament, coded 0 if "no" and 1 if "yes". Index scores were created by adding the individual item scores; the index thus constructed yielded an 11 point scale and scores could range from 1 to 11. The blending of objective and subjective indicators may be questioned, but it is not unreasonable to assume that both types of indicators contribute to a sense of "civic competence" in EC affairs.

### Construction of the "Support for the European Parliament Index"

The Index was constructed from three items in Eurobarometer 37. The first asked the respondent's perception of the importance of the European Parliament in the life of the EC with a four point scale of choices. The second asked whether the respondent would prefer to see the powers of the EP increase and yielded a three point scale. The third asked whether the Parliament should be given joint decision authority with the Council; this item was coded 1 for "not favor" and 2 for "favor". Index scores were created by adding the individual item scores; they could range from 3 to 9. Mean scores by nation were Denmark (6.26), Britain (6.68), Germany (6.86), France (7.18) and Italy (7.73).

Table 1: Predicting Citizen Knowledge of the European Community

	Denmark b (se b)	France b (se b)	Germany b (se b)
Age	-.01 (.00)**	.01 (.00)**	.01 (.00)*
Gender	.51 (.11)***	.48 (.12)***	.95 (.14)***
Education	.02 (.05)	.06 (.09)	.27 (.08)***
Occupation	.02 (.02)	.01 (.03)	.04 (.02)
Income	.03 (.02)	.05 (.02)**	.02 (.02)
Radio News	.10 (.04)*	.08 (.04)*	.11 (.06)*
TV News	-.08 (.08)	.16 (.06)**	-.02 (.10)
Newspaper	.27 (.04)***	.11 (.04)**	.29 (.06)***
Political Interest	.62 (.09)***	.42 (.09)***	.68 (.11)***
Ideology	.04 (.03)	.03 (.04)	-.03 (.04)
Party Affiliation			
Venstre/UDF/FDP	-.90 (.36)**	.00 (.24)	.78 (.46)
SocFolk/PCF/	-.75 (.90)	-.32 (.30)	---
Conserv/RPR/CDU	-.39 (.40)	.23 (.22)	.15 (.18)
SocialDem/PS/SPD	-.11 (.13)	-.20 (.19)	.11 (.18)

Ecol/Green	---	.04 (.20)	.83 (.29)**
EC Aware	.43 (.07)***	.28 (.07)***	.49 (.08)***
EC Support	.07 (.04)**	.14 (.05)**	.12 (.06)*
-----			
Adjusted R2 =	.25	.19	.36
S.E.E. =	1.47	1.57	1.70
(N = )	(847)	(712)	(739)
-----			

Source: Eurobarometer 37

Table 1: Predicting Citizen Knowledge of the European Community  
(continued)

	Great Britain b (se b)	Italy b (se b)
Age	.01 (.00)*	-.01 (.00)
Gender	.80 (.13)***	.34 (.16)*
Education	.34 (.10)***	.41 (.10)***
Occupation	-.01 (.02)	.02 (.03)
Income	.05 (.02)**	.05 (.03)
Radio News	.22 (.04)***	.05 (.05)
TV News	.09 (.09)	.27 (.11)*
Newspaper	.01 (.04)	.29 (.06)***
Political Interest	.51 (.11)***	.55 (.12)***
Ideology	.02 (.04)	-.01 (.05)
Party Affiliation		
LibDem/PRI	.67 (.29)*	.93 (.24)*
Communist	---	.06 (.25)
Conserv/DC	.45 (.18)**	.16 (.21)
Labour/PS	.34 (.17)*	-.17 (.27)
Nationalist/LL	-.34 (.58)	.10 (.68)
MSI	---	-.31 (.42)
EC Aware	.27 (.08)***	.24 (.09)**
EC Support	.05 (.05)	.23 (.09)*
-----		
Adjusted R2 =	.28	.34
S.E.E. =	1.53	1.73
(N = )	(632)	(551)
-----		

Source: Eurobarometer 37

Table 2: Predicting Citizen Support of the European Parliament

	Denmark b (se b)	France b (se b)	Germany b (se b)
Age	.01 (.00)	-.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
Gender	-.11 (.11)	.08 (.10)	.12 (.12)
Education	-.03 (.01)**	-.03 (.02)*	-.07 (.07)
Occupation	.01 (.03)	.03 (.02)	.01 (.02)
Income	-.00 (.02)	-.00 (.01)	.02 (.02)
Radio News	-.12 (.05)*	.05 (.03)	-.01 (.05)
TV News	-.05 (.09)	.04 (.05)	-.14 (.09)

Newspaper	-.02 (.06)	.03 (.03)	-.08 (.06)	
Political Interest	-.06 (.10)	-.02 (.07)	-.02 (.10)	
Ideology	.00 (.03)	-.04 (.03)	-.07 (.03)*	
Party Affiliation				
Venstre/UDF/FDP	.20 (.39)	.17 (.18)	-.33 (.39)	
SocFolk/PCF/	.46 (1.13)	-.60 (.22)**	---	
Conserv/RPR/CDU	.02 (.38)	.05 (.17)	.10 (.16)	
SocialDem/PS/SPD	-.12 (.15)	-.23 (.15)	-.06 (.15)	
Ecol/Green	---	-.15 (.15)	.40 (.24)	
EC Aware	.18 (.08)*	.20 (.06)**	.41 (.08)***	
EC Support	.48 (.04)***	.38 (.04)***	.43 (.05)***	
Know EC	.02 (.04)	-.00 (.03)	.11 (.03)***	
-----				
Adjusted R2 =		.24	.23	.33
S.E.E. =	1.26	.99	1.26	
(N= )		(549)	(485)	(523)

Note: \* p=.05; \*\* p=.01; and \*\*\* p=.001

Source: Eurobarometer 37

Table 2: Predicting Citizen Support of the European Parliament  
(continued)

	Great Britain b (se b)	Italy b (se b)
Age	-.01 (.00)	.00 (.00)
Gender	-.27 (.13)*	.12 (.10)
Education	.02 (.09)	-.11 (.06)*
Occupation	.00 (.02)	.02 (.02)
Income	.01 (.02)	-.02 (.02)
Radio News	.03 (.04)	-.00 (.03)
TV News	-.01 (.09)	-.02 (.09)
Newspaper	.01 (.04)	.03 (.04)
Political Interest	-.10 (.10)	-.04 (.07)
Ideology	.02 (.04)	.05 (.03)*
Party Affiliation		
LibDem/Repub	-.00 (.28)	.04 (.20)
Communist	---	.19 (.15)
Conserv/DC	-.34 (.18)	.24 (.13)
Labour/Socialist	.16 (.17)	.06 (.17)
MSI	---	.15 (.25)
Nationalist/LL	-.49 (.50)	-.88 (.35)**
EC Aware	.20 (.08)*	.23 (.07)***
EC Support	.44 (.05)***	.22 (.06)***
Know EC	.00 (.04)	.04 (.03)
-----		
Adjusted R2 =	.23	.14
S.E.E. =	1.25	.89
(N= )	(444)	(385)

Note: \* p=.05; \*\* p=.01; and \*\*\* p=.001

Source: Eurobarometer 37

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